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THE WARTIME ARMY LESSONS LEARNED PROGRAM:

A PERSPECTIVE FROM OPERATION JUST CAUSE

BY

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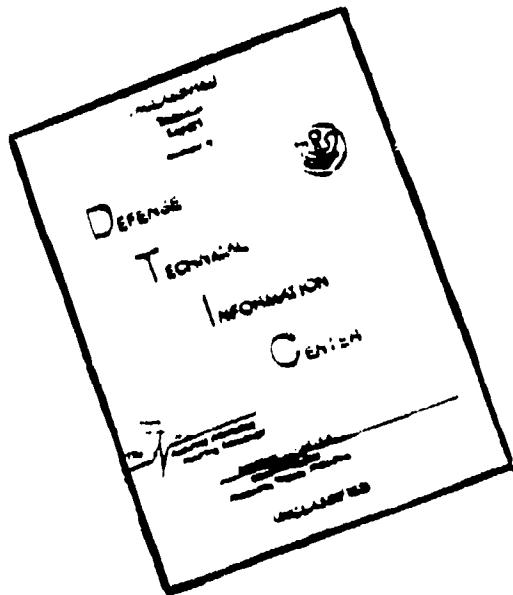
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THE WARTIME ARMY LESSONS LEARNED PROGRAM:  
A PERSPECTIVE FROM OPERATION JUST CAUSE

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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## ABSTRACT

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## INTRODUCTION

Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada in October of 1983 demonstrated the need for the Army to redress the absence of a system to capture issues and lessons learned from combat, especially from contingency operations. This void led to the creation of the Center for Army Lessons Learned and the Army Lessons Learned System (ALLS) in 1985. The ALLS, in turn, mandated the Wartime Army Lessons Learned Program (WALLP), similar in mission to the work of Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

On 19 December 1989, US forces executed Operation JUST CAUSE in the Republic of Panama. There were four objectives: protect US citizens; ensure the safe operation of the Panama Canal; support democratic institutions in Panama; and apprehend Manuel Noriega. Before the operation was complete, some 27,000 US soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen would be committed to the largest combat operation since the war in Vietnam. JUST CAUSE abounded in areas for future study--joint doctrine, strategic deployment, low intensity operations, civil-military operations, special operations, military operations on urban terrain (MOUT), night operations, airborne/air assault operations, communications, training, leadership development, strategic and tactical logistic support, and the combat debut of new equipment, to name but a few.

Operation JUST CAUSE saw the first deployment of a lessons learned team under the auspices of WALLP. At the time of JUST CAUSE, however, WALLP existed in name and mission only. There were no specific procedures and philosophy set in writing, and the team essentially organized WALLP concurrently with gathering initial impressions to develop lessons learned.

This paper documents and analyzes the operations of that team from its deployment on JUST CAUSE through the preparation of an initial impressions briefing for the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) to the completion of the Operation JUST CAUSE Army After Action Report. The paper includes a framework of lessons learning, a brief history of the Army experience, a review of JUST CAUSE team operations, identification of "lessons learned about lessons-learning" to enhance efficiency of WALLP teams deployed in the future, and it concludes with a brief analysis of WALLP effectiveness and portents for the future.

## CHAPTER I

### LESSONS LEARNING--A BRIEF BACKGROUND

To put the JUST CAUSE lessons learning experience in proper perspective and to provide a frame of reference, we must first review a few definitions, the lessons learned system, and a brief history of the process.

#### Definitions.

What are "lessons learning" and "lessons learned"? Unfortunately, there is no single, clear, succinct definition of the former, not even in Army Regulation 11-33, the keystone document of the Army Lessons Learned System (ALLS). "Lesson learning" is essentially a closed circuit. It involves the collection of data and observations, analysis, validation, dissemination, change where required to DTOML, testing, and evaluation. In its most effective application, the lesson learning process is contemporary, in that it provides feedback to commanders during combat operations. That contemporaneous quality is the greatest value of the system, contributing to more efficient operations and thus, reduced casualties. The contemporaneous aspect also distinguishes lessons learning from the writing and study of history, the former operating under time constraints so as to insure the product provides benefit to ongoing operations.

Lesson learning differs from the study or writing of history, not only in timing, but in the qualifications of the worker. The lesson learning analyst is grounded in the discipline he pursues, which is to say a fully qualified and experienced field artillery officer analyzes artillery operations. The historian serves a vital purpose as well, but his education is usually broader in comparison. In this regard, and contrary to what many leaders perceive, Army military history detachments are not chartered to develop lessons learned and provide feedback to units currently involved in combat.

The definition of combat relevant lessons learned is specific enough in AR 11-33:

Conclusions derived from analysis of observations obtained from military observations obtained from military operations and training exercises that are useful to commanders in preparing their units for combat by identifying successful doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures or problems thereto. These combat relevant lessons learned also assist proponent school commandants and the integrating center commanders in the validating or changing current doctrine, training, organization, materiel and leadership development (DTOML).<sup>1</sup>

Before continuing, the reader must understand clearly the difference between an "initial impression"--a term used frequently throughout this paper-- and a "lesson learned". "Initial impressions", or "observations", are raw information in time and place and have not undergone the rigor of careful analysis to insure they truly represent a universal lesson applicable across like units or in given situations.<sup>2</sup> They do have limited use as general indicators, but there is significant danger in using them as a basis to change

DTOML. "Lessons learned", on the other hand, are the result of analysis incorporating observations from many units involved in similar circumstances.

For example, the observation that one rifle company alleged the AT-4 antitank rockets fired during one day of combat were malfunctioning is an initial impression. The fact that the malfunction occurred in all rifle companies in a division over a week is a lesson learned. The difference between initial impressions and lessons learned is significant, yet many soldiers, commanders, military analysts, and historians erroneously use the terms interchangeably, resulting in misunderstandings and at times grossly inaccurate conclusions. Also, keep in mind one key point: Lessons learned are not the end product of the system. The end product is increased combat effectiveness.

#### History

The U.S. Army's experience with lessons learning has been spotty at best. Until the 20th century no real need seemingly existed for a formal lesson learning program. Warfare was relatively slow-paced and distances between units fairly short, such that the participants could mutually share their experiences.<sup>3</sup>

During World War I, General Pershing named the Training Section of the General Staff at Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) General Headquarters as executive agent for lessons learning procedures. At first borrowing lessons learned from the Allies, the AEF developed the Army's "first wartime system of gathering, evaluating, and applying ongoing experience".<sup>4</sup> Most of the output, however, dealt more with insuring compliance with current doctrine rather than

changing it as the enemy and type of warfare would require.<sup>5</sup> Also established during that period was the first Army organization to deal with military history, the Historical Branch, War Plans Division, General Staff. All battle reports were to be forwarded to that organization.

The World War II years saw the Army develop an awareness of lessons learned, and in fact many were disseminated to the troops by the Operations Division (OPD) of the General Staff in the form of booklets targeted at the individual soldier. The problem was that there was no centralized lessons learning system to tie together the efforts of OPD as well as the many military history detachments that had been organized. It was two years after the start of the war before the booklets emerged.

The Korean War experience in lessons learning was the most comprehensive to that date. Battle reporting systems, replacement training units, and observer teams were established. The Office of the Chief, Army Field Forces became the central processing agency for the lessons-learning system. The rub was that once again the system developed late in the conflict. Most of the heavy fighting and half of the three-year war's casualties occurred during the first year, while the lessons learning system was being organized.<sup>6</sup>

In Vietnam, once ground combat began, it was more than a year before a lessons learned system was established and operational. The Army was inundated with lessons learned; most were described by critics as "banal and unusable".<sup>7</sup>

Operation URGENT FURY on Grenada in 1983 brought into sharp focus the lack of an Army combat lessons learned system as it relates to short-notice and short-duration contingency operations. As a harbinger of more such operations to follow, URGENT FURY demonstrated the need to have the lessons learning system in-

place prior to hostilities so that lessons could be applied during combat. What little lesson learning there occurred "personally, informally, and expediently among the combat participants".<sup>8</sup> A group of officers from Fort Leavenworth were directed to develop lessons learned, but they were operating without an established combat lessons learned system and accompanying procedures. The resulting report was completed more than a year later. "As history, it served its purpose well; as contemporaneous lesson learning, it did not."<sup>9</sup> In fact, as of February 1991, while some lessons learned and issues from JUST CAUSE have been officially released for Army-wide distribution, nothing has been declassified from the URGENT FURY report.

Vetock continues with a summary:

Each war of this century required the Army to establish or re-establish its lesson-learning system in the midst of the conflict. Constructing the operational systems in the four wars consumed an average time of 18 months. Unfortunately, the first battles of these wars had already been fought, as had the second, third, or more. Why not have the system already developed and operational during peacetime, ready for immediate wartime application: Instead of dismantling or ignoring the system after a war - as has been the case consistently - the lesson-learning structure needs to continue as an integral part of peacetime combat readiness. Its engine ought to be idling before the next war begins.<sup>10</sup>

#### Center for Army Lessons Learned Established

In June 1984 an Army Studies Group, incorporating the 1983 Grenada experience, recommended to the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) that a system be

established to collect observations from training exercises, the combat training centers (CTC) and combat operations, to analyze the information, to derive lessons learned, and to act as an agent of change to incorporate the lessons learned into DTOML. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) would be responsible for the system's operations. The CSA approved the recommendation, and the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) was established in August 1985 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The functions of CALL are:

--Collect observations from a wide variety of sources, including the Army After Action Reporting System, observations from Army and joint exercises in CONUS and OCONUS, and from combat operations.

--Serve as an agent for timely change to DTOML.

--Disseminate combat relevant data and lessons learned to the total force.

--Develop and maintain a computer-assisted lessons learned data base.

Though CALL was established in 1985, it was not until 1989 that the scope of ALLS and the responsibilities of CALL and all other participants in the system were clearly laid-out. That four-year delay caused a certain amount of inefficiency and friction in the lessons learned system, as not everyone agreed at all times with CALL's interpretation of the operating details of its charter.

#### The Wartime Army Lessons Learned Program

Along with the establishment of CALL was the requirement for a subset of ALLS specifically designed for combat operations--the Wartime Army Lessons

Learned Program (WALLP). Explained in detail in AR 11-33, WALLP is designed:

- To collect relevant observations during combat operations
- To provide input to the ALLS "circuit" described earlier
- To provide immediate feedback to units in combat<sup>11</sup>

The intervening years since 1985 had seen the focus of the lessons learned community and CALL on the organization and operation of the Combat Training Centers (CTC) at Forts Irwin and Chaffee and in Hohenfels, Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). This was short-sighted, as one would think that combat operations would have priority in the lessons learned business. But the emphasis was very strong on bringing the CTCs on-line, no war was being fought, time was very short, field commanders were clamoring for lessons learned from the CTCs, and CALL resourcing in people and dollars was in short supply indeed. Something had to go onto the back-burner, so to speak, and WALLP was the inevitable choice, given constraints of time and man-power.<sup>12</sup> But in fact, a draft WALLP could have been completed and staffed at any time with the resources available. It was a matter of internal priorities of CATA and CALL.

For the first time in Army history, prior to the first battle an organization (CALL) and system (ALLS and WALLP) existed to derive contemporaneous, combat relevant lessons learned. Vetock describes the establishment of CALL (and by extension, WALLP):

What is most remarkable of all, however, is that the concern and the procedures are all taking place now, during peacetime, before the first battle of the next war. They give promise of better things about to come.<sup>13</sup>

The "better things about to come" arrived on 19 December 1989 with Operation JUST CAUSE.

CHAPTER II  
WALLP TEAM OPERATIONS -- OPERATION JUST CAUSE

Phase I--Initial Impressions for the CSA

Alert, Guidance, and Mission

Late in the evening of 19 December 1990, this author learned of the alert of the 82d Airborne Division while watching CNN. As he had just commanded a battalion in the division, and as he was aware of recent incidents in Panama, he knew full-well that the "exercise" reported by the media was simply a cover for an actual deployment.

He notified the Director of CALL that elements of two divisions were in combat in Panama and that CALL might be tasked to develop lessons learned under WALLP. The CALL division chiefs, along with the CALL historian, organized a "brain-storming" meeting to anticipate what lessons learned support should be offered or available if requested. Several TRADOC schools were alerted by telephone to be prepared to furnish subject matter experts (SMEs) to analyze the operation, possibly including actual deployment on JUST CAUSE.

As the Director was driving in to the office, an action officer in the office of the CSA telephoned the Director's office, alerting CALL to the

possibility of deploying an Army Observation Team (AOT) to develop initial impressions of the operation.

Unfamiliar as he was with ALLS and with the framework of the yet-to-be-completed WALLP, the CSA action officer asked what should be included in a tasking order to CALL. A CALL action officer provided a listing which included a mission statement, AOT size, authority, command relationships, and support relationships. It was also crucial that, from the outset, everyone involved should be thoroughly informed; and the message addressees had to include all intermediate headquarters, as well as the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), 7th Infantry Division (Light), 82d Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, and SOUTHCOM.

The remainder of 20-21 December was spent in analysis of the operation to determine what AOT member qualifications would be necessary to match the type of units involved and their activities, as well as funding, administration, and logistics requirements.

On 22 December the tasking message arrived at HQ TRADOC from DCSOPS, HQDA. Thereafter, the AOT would be essentially OPCON to the DCSOPS. The message alerted participating units (battalion and above) to submit initial impressions reports to CALL no later than 30 days after unit redeployment to CONUS. Regarding the AOT, the message tasked CDRTRADOC "to organize and deploy to Panama, a team to observe operations and conduct on-scene interviews" and more specifically:

- a. Team will not exceed six males and should be knowledgeable of combat, combat support, combat service support, special operations forces, low intensity conflict and joint operations.
- b. Team should arrive in Panama no later than 29 December.

c. Team is authorized direct interface with USARSOUTH assigned and augmented units, but will not interfere with those units involved in direct combat operations.<sup>1</sup>

The Commander, TRADOC was further directed to:

- a. Establish liaison with USARSOUTH and XVIII Abn Corps.
- b. Conduct interviews with personnel from FORSCOM units after they have redeployed to CONUS.
- c. Schedule (through DAMO-FDQ) and conduct interviews with selected ARSTAF personnel.
- d. Provide first impressions NLT 30 Jan 90 and submit issues and formal report to HQDA (DAMO-FDQ) NLT 120 days after end of Operation JUST CAUSE.<sup>2</sup>

Later that same day, Commander, TRADOC, dispatched a message to various TRADOC activities, along with CINCSOUTH and Commanders, FORSCOM and USARSOUTH. The message reiterated the earlier HQDA message, but added funding information. Funding would be provided initially by CAC, with shortfalls filled by HQ TRADOC. TRADOC eventually would be reimbursed by HQDA.<sup>3</sup>

The team analyzed the mission and specified tasks, determined implied tasks, and developed an operation order. The mission statement was:

Deploy TRADOC Collection Team NLT 29 Dec 89 to Panama, collect combat relevant observations associated w/Operation JUST CAUSE; submit Initial Impressions Report NLT 30 Jan 90.<sup>4</sup>

Coordinating instructions and implied tasks included:

- a. Interface with other collection teams (XVIII Airborne Corps Historian, 44th Military History Detachment (MHD), and CSI JTF-Panama Representative).
- b. Render SITREPs to CALL every three days.
- c. Director, CALL would provide tape transcription support.

d. Once in Panama, the Team Chief would notify the Director, CALL of any additional SME required and the anticipated length of stay.

e. Compare and contrast lessons learned from URGENT FURY and JUST CAUSE.<sup>5</sup>

#### Team Selection

The quality and qualifications of the team members was absolutely critical to mission success. Hence it deserves detailed discussion. Selection of the team was based on the following factors:

a. Mission.

b. Size. No more than six members, per HQDA guidance. Problems had arisen during Operation URGENT FURY, wherein many people from throughout all the armed forces simply had to go to Grenada. As a senior officer told me shortly after that operation, "Every plane that arrived seemed to have a 'surprise' on board." That memory still lived within XVIII Airborne Corps and the 82d Airborne Division. When JUST CAUSE began, so also did a very tightly controlled personnel accountability system designed to insure that only individuals critical to the accomplishment of the mission deployed to Panama. This made complete sense, as airlift is always at a premium in such operations-- even individual seats. A small team had a far, far better chance of getting on the same airplane, arriving in-theater together, and accomplishing the mission in limited time. Such time might be measured in only hours.

c. Time available. Time was absolutely critical in team selection. As the deployment would be on-order with little, if any, advance warning, the most

reasonable course of action was to select members from Fort Leavenworth. This would facilitate processing for overseas movement (POR), familiarization with the tentative collection plan, issue of equipment, and so forth. The complexity of movement would be greatly reduced if all members started from the same location. The team did not know but that with the next hour would come orders to move immediately to Fort Bragg.

On the Panama end, since SOUTHCOM and JTF-SOUTH may not have clearly understood the mission of the team or its authority from HQDA, the team did not know but that they would be told to leave shortly after arrival. That put a premium on moving quickly with a small, low-visibility team.

Given that time in-theater could possibly be measured in hours, we could not afford a long, involved "train-up" period for the team members to become familiar with contingency operations, the units, and their tactical and logistic operations. We needed individuals already as familiar as possible with those topics.

d. Communications. Information concerning communications between team members once deployed throughout Panama was lacking. We did not know if commercial telephone service would be operational. We did know that military communications would be overloaded (it always is during contingency operations) and that our guidance was not to become a burden to units and to maintain a low profile. Lack of communications would have less impact on a small team.

e. Transportation. As with communications, information on transportation was spotty, but it was a sound assumption that transport both into theater and intra-theater would be catch-as-catch-can. Obviously, the smaller the team, the more the availability of transport. It is far easier for six people to hitch a

ride on a helicopter and all arrive at the same time at a destination than a team of twenty.

f. Topic areas and likely units. No guidance came from HQDA as to any topics in particular should go into the Initial Impressions Report for the CSA. Accordingly, we used best judgement after reviewing the URGENT FURY After Action Report (AAR), studying the JUST CAUSE troop list, and making some informed guesses as to the command relationships at tactical, operational, and strategic level. Once these were prioritized, the qualifications for team members were also prioritized. Wherever possible, we sought-out an officer with expertise in several areas. For this operation we wanted officers familiar with contingency operations, joint operations, light and airborne infantry, mechanized infantry (if possible, but not a higher priority than light and airborne), and with experience in Panama.

Additional Manning.

At Fort Bragg Major Bob Wright (USAR), the XVIII Airborne Corps Command Historian, joined the AOT. He was never officially a member, from the perspective of DCSOPS approval or having any access to the data collected and reports generated by the AOT. However, he did travel with and provided feedback to the team.

On 2 January 1990, ODCSOPS, HQDA granted authority to send two additional personnel. These were Lieutenant Colonel Joe Streitz (USMC) and Command Sergeant Major Tom Cruise (USA). In the absence of any DoD or OJCS team collecting lessons learned on joint operations, and at the request of the

Commander, USMC Combat Development Command, Lieutenant Colonel Streitz was added to the team. He was a Marine unit commander during URGENT FURY, and he provided valuable information on joint operations and comparisons/contrasts between URGENT FURY and JUST CAUSE. Command Sergeant Major Cruise, from the Florida Ranger Camp, provided valuable feedback on NCO issues in general and Ranger operations in particular.

#### Organization

The AOT was organized with a Team Chief (Colonel Akers) and an operations/administration officer (Major Schroer). The latter's duties included arranging for billets and transport of the team as a whole, establishing communications, submitting periodic SITREPs back to CALL, and insuring orders and the "paper trail" were completed.

#### Security Classification

This was an extremely contentious issue throughout the process, from AOT alert to turn-in of the final report in May 1990. Guidance from an action officer at HQDA early in the planning for deployment was that the CSA wanted to insure no information was released without his (the CSA) approval. Based on some unfortunate early release of information during URGENT FURY which subsequently proved to be misleading, the CSA did not want something that happened once in one unit to be advertised as pertaining to all units on JUST CAUSE. Accordingly, the CSA directed that all AOT-collected material be

classified as "Secret--Close-Hold". The AOT was permitted to out-brief immediate commanders after interviews were conducted in their units. Authority to grant access to anyone else, other than the immediate AOT, was vested in the DCSOPS. This classification guidance caused numerous awkward situations, for example when the AOT chief had to tell general officers on two occasions, that they would have to leave briefing rooms or could not look at the initial impressions script or the final report. In a few cases those concerned became utterly obnoxious, constantly demanding access even though told that they would have to call the DCSOPS for clearance. Such situations continued throughout Phases I and II and caused unfortunate friction and wasted time. In two cases this severely damaged the relationship between two of the AOT officers and their raters for whom they would return to work after the final report was complete. Overall, this was a problem not with the JUST CAUSE units and headquarters, but rather with TRADOC proponents and school headquarters. As a matter of fact, for a period of time the Director, CALL and his chain of command through CDRTRADOC were not privy to the material.

#### **Administrative Considerations**

Because of previous assignment to units deployed to Panama, familiarization with unit missions and organizations, and working and personal relationships with key commanders and staff, the AOT members covered-down on units and topics as discussed earlier.

Beginning on 20 December the team operations officer, MAJ Schroer, began keeping an official team log to include copies of all incoming and outgoing

messages, copies of orders, and anything else even remotely relevant. In retrospect, this was an inspired decision. Each team member kept a personal diary/log as well.

As individual notes would become historical records, team members standardized by using the green cloth, hard-back, journal book stocked by the Federal Supply Service. These books were 5"x 8", and they were the perfect size for carrying in tactical or garrison situations.

#### Predeployment Training.

On the evening of 27 December four team members (Lieutenant Colonel Helena, Major Buckley, Major Schroer, and Chief Warrant Officer Two Fulton) flew from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Bragg by Army C-12. Upon arrival they were joined by Colonel Akers and Colonel Archer.

Early on 28 December the team received a very useful briefing from representatives of the Army Research Institute--Presidio of Monterey (ARI-POM). Flying to Fort Bragg the night before, the ARI-POM representatives addressed interview techniques and data collection procedures based on experiences at the combat training centers (CTC). This was not wholly alien, as officers who have themselves conducted after action reviews (AAR) during unit external evaluations and who have experienced interviews by observer controllers at the CTCs, generally know how to draw-out information during interviews. Nevertheless, the ARI-POM instruction was beneficial.

Following the ARI-POM briefing, the team received two briefings at HQ XVIII Airborne Corps. The first was a standard organization, mission and capabilities

briefing usually given to visitors but very useful as a point of reference for those team members unfamiliar with the corps and subordinate units. The second briefing addressed JUST CAUSE operations to date. That afternoon the team attended an operations update at HQ 82d Airborne Division. Some tentative data for issues and initial impressions surfaced during the course of these interviews. Both of these briefings were very helpful, laying-out the commanders' intents and then how the operations were actually executed. As a result of these briefings, when the AOT arrived in Panama, the team members understood all the critical locations, missions, units, and activities.

#### Equipment

Team members deployed with light-weight BDU uniforms, Kevlar helmets, LBE, rucksacks, sleeping gear, personal items, and a set of civilian clothes appropriate for the climate. They were issued protective masks, pistols, and several MREs from HHC, XVIII Airborne Corps, at Fort Bragg. Each member also carried writing materials, journals, and hand-held tape recorders with spare batteries and tapes. (The recording and playback quality of the recorders was inconsistent, regardless of the condition of the batteries.) Some had personal 35mm cameras with film supplied by the Public Affairs Office, Fort Leavenworth. Ammunition was drawn informally from units in Panama. Team equipment included a 20mm ammunition can with hasp, lock, and chain to function as a mobile field safe. Also in the can were additional writing materials, blank journal books, spare recorders, tapes, batteries, film, and the team log.

## Development of Tentative Collection Plan

Prior to departure from Fort Leavenworth, the team reviewed the classified URGENT FURY AARs in detail. That information, together with what was known from the media about JUST CAUSE objectives, operations and organization, enabled the team to develop a tentative list of topics. These were organized by battlefield operating system (BOS). Call action officers also solicited essential elements of information (EEI) from various TRADOC proponents and schools. These lists of what items the proponents thought worthy of collection varied in quality. Some lists were pages of the most mundane questions imaginable, such as questions on soldiers' diets. Clearly these authors did not understand the AOT's charter and the limited people and time available. Other proponents submitted lists of prioritized, well-reasoned topics. The AOT screened the EEI and incorporated items in the draft collection plan where applicable.

All parties clearly understood that the collection plan was tentative for two reasons. First, the operation itself could be different than anticipated. Second, the team did not want to show-up on the doorstep, as it were, of SOUTHCOM like so many prima donnas with a concrete plan, risking biting the hands that were to feed us. Instead, we wanted to ask SOUTHCOM, JTF-SOUTH, and USARSO for their recommendations, as they undoubtedly had a far better grip on priorities and the gravity of various issues, at least initially. This philosophy also greatly aided in quickly developing a very sound working relationship at all levels. The team was developing the draft up to shortly before departure from Port Leavenworth.

#### Deployment

The AOT deployed on 29 December from Pope Air Force Base on a C-141B containing vehicles and thirteen passengers, including two State Department officials. As stated previously, control of personnel and verification of "need to go" was very tight at both Fort Bragg and at Pope. Having been diverted from Howard Air Force Base, the aircraft landed at night at Tocumen-Torrijos Airport.

#### In-Theater Administrative/Logistics Considerations

The team was housed in a gym of a recreation center and a BOQ room on Fort Clayton. Space was at a premium everywhere in Panama. The team had the use of a conference room in the USARSO headquarters building. Team members were not tied-down to Fort Clayton, however, but used it as a base of operations from which to travel throughout Panama, remaining overnight with units wherever the interviewing process required.

Telephone communications were provided by USARSO. After a few days team members established a low-key "old-boy" net with pilots of stand-by aircraft of the PAO office. Through this system the team could generally get local helicopter support in a reasonably timely manner. It is doubtful the PAO really knew about all of this, but neither the team nor the pilots raised the issue. The pilots were universally professional and gladly helped the team. The USARSO PAO provided a collection of photos to supplement those taken by team members.

### Development of Finalized Collection Plan

Once in Panama and after attending JTP-SOUTH briefings, the team modified the topics, adding and deleting a few as appropriate. The draft plan was really fairly accurate, requiring few modifications. The plan naturally evolved as the team, through interviews, began to discern patterns of successes and issues. Exploring these new topics took the team down branches of the original plan. The AOT anticipated this and remained flexible.

### Team Operational Policies

First, the team determined not to be an imposition on units, understanding that everyone was hard-pressed to make ends meet with transportation, food and communications. Accordingly, the team did not ask for dedicated transport during their stay in Panama. Team members were totally equipped to operate tactically as individuals. In fact, by remaining low-key and not pressing the issue that we were on a CSA-directed mission, all sorts of offers of support were forthcoming. Support from interviewed units and the SOUTHCOM, JTP-SOUTH, and USARSO staffs was excellent.

Not having dedicated transportation had an unanticipated benefit. It gave the team members many opportunities to interview more soldiers as well as leaders who would not otherwise be available. This author, for example, was given a ride by the ADC-O, 82d Airborne Division and interviewed him en route. Later, hitching a ride with MPs produced good information.

Second, the team would not "push if the door was closed". In only one case did someone--a senior field grade commander--refuse to talk to the team. The AOT member involved had already interviewed the brigade XO, but the commander on three occasions declined to talk. With the HQDA guidance being not to interfere with combat operations, and not wanting to establish an adversary relationship that might spread to other commanders and cause ill will, the team member quietly departed the unit. In fact, as the word spread of the team's activities and its credibility, commanders, proud of their soldiers and their accomplishments, actively sought-out the team members. Not being "pushy", but rather low-key and professional, actually opened more doors to units and greatly facilitated an open, no-holds-barred exchange of information. This contrasts with an adversary relationship noted during the URGENT FURY lessons learned activity. Commanders and soldiers, hungry for information about the big picture elsewhere in Panama, constantly asked AOT members "How are we doing?" As another example, the low-key approach produced a three-hour taped interview with the CofS and the CG of the 7th Infantry Division (Light).

#### Collection/Prioritization of Information and Data

As stated previously, the members of the AOT surmised that a recall order, requiring return to CONUS, might arrive momentarily. This uncertainty placed a premium on quick collection of what information was close at hand. The AOT Chief's guidance was to collect as much information as possible from units in the immediate vicinity of Panama City. As time was available, or said another way, as each day passed without a recall order, the AOT members ventured to

distant points--the Atlantic side of the isthmus and the city of David, near the Costa Rican border. With time, the AOT gradually transitioned from the general to the specific. Throughout the operation, the AOT Chief attended the daily JTF-SOUTH update for LTG Stiner, as well as each shift change briefing in the Joint Operations Center.

The AOT assembled at the end of each day for an in-process review (IPR). Each member would take five to ten minutes to brief the others on his itinerary for the day and information collected. From these daily IPRs the AOT members exchanged and verified data and modified the collection plan as required. Issues which emerged and were verified from several sources were added to the draft initial impressions report. During this procedure we encountered the need for an administrative cell of a senior NCO and a typist to not only handle routine administrative tasks, but to start typing a draft report. That would have greatly facilitated completion of the briefing once back in CONUS. These two people could have been equipped with a laptop computer and small printer, and they could have been proficient in word processing and graphics, the latter for briefing vugraph slides.

With extremely rare exception, everyone was very forthcoming and candid when interviewed, quick to praise as well as to point out deficiencies. Commanders and leaders were proud of their soldiers and wanted their story told. Some key logistics officers and brigade-level commanders were offended that the AOT did not get to them the first day in Panama, though that was simply impossible given the size of the team.

## Development of Vignettes for CINCSOUTH

Late on 6 January 1990, CINCSOUTH, General Thurman, tasked the team to research and write vignettes of about fourteen combat actions which were representative of the high level of proficiency, dedication, maturity, and sense of duty of the soldiers, airmen, Marines, and sailors participating in JUST CAUSE. His intent was to provide the vignettes to the President and to members of Congress.<sup>6</sup> This required the team to stop action on the primary mission and to extend their deployment in Panama several days. Each team member took responsibility for several vignettes based on familiarity with the units and their combat actions. As an example, this author spent 7 January interviewing the battalion commander, other officers and NCOs, and selected soldiers of TF 3-504 PIR who participated in the seizure of Renacer prison, and he spent 8 January interviewing a similar group from TF 2-504 PIR who seized the PDP garrison at Panama Viejo by air assault, later also seizing the Marriott Hotel. Some team members had to fly back to CONUS to conduct interviews and then return to Panama, as some units and individuals had already left Panama. In at least one case, based on additional information gained by team members and the security classification of some aspects of the operation, CINCSOUTH deleted a vignette from the list. The vignettes were classified "Close-Hold" and turned over to CINCSOUTH on 10 January 1990.

## Redeployment

Prior to redeployment the AOT Chief out-briefed CINCSOUTH on the issues collected by the team, as well as general impressions.

The team redeployed on a C-141B which was backhauling ammunition from Tocumen Airport to Pope Air Force Base. Prior to departure all team members were inspected by US customs officials. The SOUTHCOM chain-of-command remembered all too well the instances during URGENT FURY of soldiers attempting to smuggle contraband and captured weapons off Grenada.

Following turn-in of weapons and protective masks, team members returned to home stations, but made other stops en route. Colonel Akers pursued special operations information at Fort Bragg. Colonel Archer conducted interviews with family support group officials at Fort Ord. Lieutenant Colonel Helena diverted to Charleston Air Force Base to gather information on logistics movements through that aerial port, and Chief Warrant Officer Two Fulton diverted through Fort Polk to conduct family support group interviews.

#### Analysis and Development of Initial Impressions Briefing for CSA

As the AOT redeployed to CONUS it had collected data on some 300 issues which constituted a rough draft of the initial impressions briefing. Reconvening at Fort Leavenworth for two weeks, the team modified the issues as more recent input dictated and developed nine major categories for the issues:

Intelligence	Operations
Training	Doctrine
Logistics	Leadership
Force Mix	Soldiers and Families
Equipment	

The final product was a two-hour scripted briefing with accompanying slides. In addition to the central portion of the briefing--the issues--the AOT also addressed these topics:

AOT mission	AOT chronology
AOT member qualifications	JUST CAUSE environment
Phase II plan	Recommendations

COL Akers attended an XVIII Airborne Corps AAR at which he briefed Lieutenant General Stiner, who, as the Corps Commander, acted as Commander, JTF-SOUTH. Lieutenant General Stiner agreed with the general thrust of the initial impressions briefing, as well as the specific issues. After confirming with the DCSOPS who could be briefed prior to the CSA, Colonel Akers, with several AOT members present, briefed these senior officers:

26 Jan 90 Lieutenant General Wishart, CDR, CAC  
29 Jan 90 General Foss, CDR, TRADOC  
30 Jan 90 General Burba, CINCFORSCOM

Colonel Akers briefed the CSA on 4 February. General Vuono was impressed with the qualifications of the team members and their selection. He liked what the team had accomplished to date and directed that the team develop the Army After Action Report for JUST CAUSE. This report would be due at the end of May 1990. The CSA further directed that the AOT return to Panama to confirm earlier observations and to travel to Fort Bragg to evaluate civil affairs (CA) and psychological operations (PSYOPS) unit structures in light of the JUST CAUSE experience. Phase I was complete with the briefing to the CSA. As of this writing the Initial Impressions Briefing remains classified "Secret--Close-Hold".

## Phase II--The Army After Action Report (AAR)

### Concept

By the start of Phase II, the majority of significant issues and lessons learned had been discovered. Phase II consisted of additional information collection through receipt of unit Initial Impressions Reports, unit AARs, selected personal interviews through unit visits, follow-up unit interviews and other collections efforts by TRADOC proponents. The assembled information was to be further analyzed and the final Army After Action Report prepared and delivered to the CSA by 30 May 1990. An additional benefit from this effort was the creation of a data base at CALL to support further research on JUST CAUSE.

Planning for Phase II began early-on during Phase I. As early as 17 January 1990, CALL notified, through MACOM HQs, all participating units and requested:

- Copies of unit initial impressions/after action reports down to battalion/separate company/detachment level.
- Permission to attend any unit (brigade or higher) "hot wash" after action reviews.
- Call be added an an information addressee on all future JUST CAUSE message traffic.
- Access to redeployed units for the purpose of conducting surveys and interviews.
- Copies of staff journals, down to battalion task force level to assist in developing the historical summary. <sup>7</sup>

Team Expansion.

The original six-man AOT, reinforced by the two members later in the operation, was the main effort for converting the Initial Impressions briefed to the CSA into the final Army AAR. Appropriate TRADOC schools and proponents would eventually bear the responsibility for fixing the issues surfaced in the final report. Accordingly, they were brought into Phase II as secondary participants to give those organizations a feeling of sponsorship for the final AAR and its contents.

The proponent SMEs were not to be selected simply based on availability. Director, CALL specified in a 20 February message that:

All proponent SME must be experts in topics for which information is collected. We encourage proponents to designate SME who has approximately nine months retainability and who are prepared to assist CALL in development of final after action report and action plan over the coming months.<sup>8</sup>

During March and April 1990 approximately twenty-six SME from TRADOC activities participated in follow-up visits to Forts Bragg, Ord, Polk and Campbell, as well as to Panama.

Follow-up Visits

With the blessings of CINCFORSCOM, CINCSOUTH, CDRTRADOC, and DCSOPS, the Director of CALL was made the "entry point" for all agencies desiring access to units. As participating units redeployed to CONUS they were inundated with

requests for agencies throughout the Army at large, and TRADOC in particular, to visit the units and interviews commanders and soldiers. In several cases there was no request--the interviewers just showed-up on the units' doorsteps, complete with poorly conceived collection plans and requirements. In fact these efforts to conduct independent visits were in direct contravention to a CDRTRADOC message of 8 January 1990, which clearly stated:

- a. All information collection relating to Operation JUST CAUSE will be coordinated through CALL. TRADOC agencies will not coordinate directly with units involved in the operation.
- b. All information collected by any TRADOC source will be routed through CALL to obtain HQDA approval prior to release.
- c. Schools and centers...must submit their plan and detailed collection requirements to CALL with preferred dates of implementation. CALL will coordinate proponent implementation through HQ, FORSCOM to minimize disruption of unit activities. <sup>9</sup>

The guidance was sound and the intent was honorable, but the reality was little short of a "feeding frenzy" as TRADOC proponent representatives continued to directly approach units for interviews and as exasperated unit commanders contacted CALL asking why people were not complying with the TRADOC message. The fact that a few TRADOC activities knowingly persisted in violating this stricture, causing disruption for units and the AOT, not only bespoke unprofessional self-interest, but also threatened to cause units to close their doors to all further interviews--AOT included. Such uncoordinated visits were major disruptions to the units' training plans and their attempts to get on with routine training activities, block leaves and the like. This was never fully resolved, though CALL and the AOT did their best to control the situation.

Each CALL-sponsored follow-up visit was coordinated with the unit to ensure the interviews were completed with limited distraction to unit training.

Director, CALL dispatched a standard-format message to each location addressing:

- a. Confirmation of visit dates.
- b. Size of interview team, to include original AOT members and additional proponent SMEs.
- c. Tentative schedule of events, remaining completely flexible.

Director, CALL designated an operations officer to coordinate the visit, travel to the installation, and to coordinate all interviews and administrative support with the installation POC. The installation POC then coordinated all interviews and administrative support with subordinate unit POCs. The CALL operations officer was from elsewhere in CALL, not from the AOT. This arrangement permitted the AOT members to concentrate on collecting information, rather than being bogged-down with bureaucratic and administrative details. The senior AOT member present was in overall charge of the visit.

On the first day of each visit a member of the AOT briefed the participating SMEs, giving them access to key documents and laying-out the rules of conduct, as it were. All SMEs also received the Initial Impressions Briefing given to the CSA to help focus their efforts. In-process reviews (IPR) were conducted daily with all AOT members and SME to trade notes and surface new issues. If the SME discovered a significant new issue, the AOT would analyze it and incorporate it, if justified, into the final report.

A copy of all information collected by the proponent SMEs was to be provided to the CALL on-site operations officer prior to the SMEs' departure. In this manner the information would augment the information collected by the few

members of the small AOT, not all of whom travelled to each installation. In most cases, this exchange of information was accomplished. In a few unfortunate cases, the SME simply ignored the guidance. Raising the issue to general officer level would have further taxed the limited time and energy of the AOT, so such violations were largely ignored, though the AOT could take action on subsequent visits to bar the offender from attending under AOT/CALL auspices.

The CALL operations officer remained after the AOT and proponent SME departed to tie-up loose ends and to settle any outstanding issues with the installation. This organization was consistently very successful.

#### Analysis of Information and Data

As its analysis of information of data continued, the AOT found several of the initial impressions in need of modification. This was anticipated, as the AOT and the tasking authorities recognized that initial impressions are based on that information collected during a limited time and with limited analysis. The information gained from the follow-on visits and reports and journals submitted by participating units greatly increased the accuracy of the issues, conclusions, and recommendations.

Each member of the AOT was responsible for several categories of the issues. For example, this author developed the issues dealing with training and with equipment. This analysis and writing was not in a vacuum, as all members of the AOT at one time or another reviewed each other's issues, providing input they may have discovered in their own interviews. This cross-fertilization and intra-team communication was an absolutely indispensable element of the success of the AOT operations.

As a peripheral issue, the AOT members found themselves constantly in an education mode, explaining to one and all the critical differences between initial impressions and lessons learned and the serious pitfalls of confusing the two. (Based on the AOT experience, most Army leaders at all levels do not understand the difference.)

#### Development of Final Army After Action Report

The final report submitted to the CSA was in two sections--a historical summary, including combat chronology, and the lessons learned. The historical summary was prepared jointly by CSI--Lieutenant Colonel J.R. McLean and Doctor L.A. Yates--at ISC and by the CALL historian, Doctor Richard Stewart. It included a description of the history of the Panamanian situation and a day-by-day summary of operations. The summary also included maps.

The issues section was derived from the initial impressions briefing, and it was organized with the same nine categories of issues used in that briefing. Each lesson learned, or issue, included an issue title, discussion, recommendation, and action activity or agency. These agencies were addressed at Army level; the action agency for MOUT training, for example was listed as "TRADOC".

On 28 May 1990, the AOT Chief forwarded the report to the CSA. Though portions of the report have been used in three CALL bulletins since August 1991, the report remains classified "Secret--Close Hold".

## CHAPTER III

### LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT LESSON LEARNING

#### Missions/Guidance

--Be prepared to write your own ticket, so to speak. Be familiar with the regulations concerning lessons learning and WALLP and what a higher headquarters should tell you for you to get the job done. This can be an absolutely invaluable opportunity to defuse a myriad of problems right at the beginning. Such an opportunity will not reappear. Make maximum use of it by being prepared for it.

--Insure the team mission is clear, along with the team's size and status, i.e. OPCON or attached, to whom, and at what stages of the operation. This must be established early-on. This will influence support arrangement such as administration, billets, rations, and transport. In garrison areas this may not seem to be critical--a rental car and a BOQ room may be sufficient. But in a combat area, this may require typed attachment orders.

--Suspenses must be clearly understood, as well as the form of final products.

#### Team Size, Qualifications, and Organization

--Establish a priority of topics and issues, and arrange team qualifications in that order. Team size will probably be constrained.

--Make every effort to identify people who possess knowledge in several of the areas. That provides great benefits: back-up in the event of injury and a second set of eyes on each topic.

--Identify people with those qualifications who have served with the specific units deployed or who have personal relationships with staff and commanders.

--Keep the team size to a minimum. A couple of people may be too few to collect the information, given the size of the AOR and the time available. Consider the mission, guidance from higher headquarters, administrative/logistics support available, flexibility, and necessity to maintain a low profile. At some point "bigger" is not necessarily "better" and in fact becomes counterproductive.

--Include in the team an administrative call of a really sharp, dependable senior NCO who can make things happen despite bureaucracy and an equally sharp, articulate typist. MOS is pretty much immaterial. The NCO would relieve the officers of the administrative burden (such as Major Schroer was tasked) and supervise the typist. The typist would be equipped with a lap-top computer and printer. He would be proficient in word processing and graphics programs and would be able to prepare briefings, tentative issues, and the like. They both should have the same security clearance as the rest of the team--top secret, though not necessarily for special compartmented information. If finding soldiers with these ranks and qualifications is too difficult, then consider raising the rank.

There are some advantages in these two people being captains. They would have the military education level and experience to critically review the team members' writings and provide valuable feedback. More importantly, they would also constitute a "reserve" in the event another team member is injured or the

work load suddenly increases through additional committed combat units or decreased time available for collection. Finally, as captains, vice NCOs, they will have fewer problems gaining access to units for interviews.

#### **Administrative/Logistics Considerations and Support**

--Establish, at the first opportunity, an official team log with copies of all electrically-transmitted messages, orders, relevant notes, and minutes of meetings. This collection must be as comprehensive as possible. When in doubt, keep it!

--Publish an operations order for the mission, covering at least preparation, deployment, and execution. This will bring shortcomings into focus and will be a historical source document. This is a time-tested format to insure you "don't forget nothing".

--Publish blanket travel orders on DD Form 1610 for each team member to allow the absolute maximum flexibility in modes of transportation and deviation of itinerary. Include:

- a. Travel in civilian clothes authorized (in case the member must return commercially or must deviate to other installations by commercial carrier on return to CONUS).
- b. Authorization to carry classified documents.
- c. Authorization to transport individual weapon.
- d. Statement of non-availability not required (as travel might include civilian destinations).
- e. Rental car authorized.
- f. Verification of security clearance.
- g. Authorization to use non-governmental facilities.

h. Headquarters to which attached and for what; e.g. "Service member attached to JTF-SOUTH/XVIII Airborne Corps for quarters, mess and transportation."

i. Variation of itinerary authorized.

--**Insure the AOT receives theater clearance prior to departure from CONUS.**

The theater CINC must not be surprised by someone in his AOR representing and reporting back to the CSA without the CINC's knowledge. Theater clearance requests must include security clearances for all AOT members.

--**Plan early-on for transcription of interview tapes, to include security clearances for typists, hardware, secure work facilities, and secure storage.**

--**Establish a system to receive, catalog, review, store, forward, and dispose of all incoming journals, reports, tapes, maps, photos, messages and notes.** Many of these will ultimately become historical documents.

--**Some team members must have SCI clearance.** Insure all SCI clearances are passed to all SSO offices prior to deployment from CONUS. Confirm this is accomplished in addition to collateral clearances. Maintain the date-time group or all message traffic transmitting clearances in the team log.

--**Establish uniform sizes and formats for all notebooks and journals.**

--**Test all hand-held tape recorders prior to deployment.**

--**Publish courier orders for SCI material for at least two team members.**

Maintain copies with team members and in the team log.

#### **Security/Need-to-Know/Releaseability of Information**

--**This must be clearly spelled-out by HQDA at the outset.** Guidance must address not only the official classification, but the level of "need-to-know" as well. This can be an extremely emotional, highly-charged subject, especially

among higher-level commanders. If not handled properly and in a discrete manner, it can jeopardize the entire mission.

--Once the decision is made, the classifying authority (not the AOT) should notify the theater CINC, the ARSTAFF, CINCPORSOM, and CDRTRADOC.

#### Collection Plan Development and Execution

--Prepare a draft collection plan prior to deployment. Base the draft on guidance (if any) from higher headquarters, types of units deployed, and anticipated combat operations.

--Time permitting, solicit EEI from interested TRADOC proponents and schools. Incorporate the input in the draft plan. Better yet, each proponent/school should maintain an EEI list on file at CALL. The list could be updated every six months or so. This procedure would eliminate last minute scrambling to provide EEI to an AOT, and it would provide greater assurance the EEI would be incorporated into the draft collection plan. Very short duration contingency operations make such on-call EEI even more imperative.

--Seek input from the theater CINC or his designated representative, as well as staff officers.

--Never have a completely firm plan, as it will act as a set of blinders to unanticipated issues. Keep eyes and ears wide open. Stay flexible.

--Prioritize units and locations to be visited. Time might be severely limited.

--Continually assess the source of input—officers, NCOs, soldiers, commanders, leaders, staffers. Insure a representative sampling where needed. Consider credibility as based on proximity to the action and knowledge of the operation, not solely on rank.

--Never portray an attitude of being in a hurry. The person interviewed must perceive that he or she is the most important person in the world to the interviewer.

--Always ask permission prior to tape recording.

--Conduct daily IPRs with all AOT members able to be present. Use this meeting as a forum to determine emerging patterns of issues, to verify and exchange information, to sort out administrative problems, to modify the collection plan, and to insure all units and key individuals are interviewed.

#### **Relationships with Headquarters to Which Attached and Interviewed Units**

--Present your credentials quickly at a time convenient to the commander. This applies from the theater CINC on down to the lowest level of leader. The theater CINC deserves to know who is in his AOR, and solid support from him early-on is critical for mission success. Do this poorly, and you may find yourself and your team on the next flight back to CONUS--regardless of who sent you. Remember, the JUST CAUSE AOT worked for the CSA, but CINCSOUTH worked for the Secretary of Defense. That is a key point. Once you get the CINC and the CJTF on your side, there will be no end to the support you will get.

--The AOT Chief should have daily access to the commander, the chief of staff, and the J-3 of the headquarters to which the team is attached. That access provides a conduit for passing information to the "users", as well as gaining support for the team and its activities.

--A commander (maybe even the CINC) may ask you to ferret-out some information for him that could assist in his on-going operations. Don't view such a request as a burden; rather it is a compliment of the highest order indicating his trust in you and your credibility. By all means, seize the

opportunity, time and resources permitting. It helps the CINC, or any other commander that makes such a request, to fight the battle. It may save lives. Again, it will enhance your credibility throughout the unit.

--Outbrief the unit commanders and the theater CINC prior to leaving their areas. Again, a company commander may derive real, immediate tactical benefit from information collection in his unit. Sanitize sources if the situation dictates (that is a judgement call), but share the information if at all possible. Comply with security guidance, but use judgement and common sense in ambiguous situations. Remember, the intent of the entire process--AOT, AAR, briefings to the CSA--is to get lessons learned quickly to the lowest levels of the Army to enhance battlefield operations.

--If for some reason a leader or soldier does not want to talk or denies access to his unit, then back-off. Better to miss that input than to establish a reputation, however undeserved, spread throughout the AOR that the team is a "bunch of pushy prima donnas from the Ivory Palace". Keeping a low profile will open far more doors for interviews. Make the interviewed leader or soldier feel that the AOT is there to serve him, that you want to tell his story.

#### Predeployment Training

--Make every effort to schedule briefings from CALL on AR 11-33 concerning the ALLS and WALLP and from someone familiar with interviewing techniques and "do's and don'ts".

--Schedule briefings by deployed unit rear detachments if time permits; e.g. the briefings the AOT received at Fort Bragg from the XVIII Abn Corps and 82d Abn Div rear detachments.

#### Chain-of-Command

--Everyone must understand the command relationships. This may be complicated, but it is a must and should be clearly laid out from the start. It is best if this is contained in the initial tasking directive or message, with information distribution to all commanders, CINCs and headquarters that may, even remotely, be involved. It is amazing how many of these agencies want to use the AOT for their own very worthy purposes, a situation that can become, at some point a major impediment to mission success. The AOT can assist them--the AOT should assist--but a balance must be struck if time is limited.

#### Final Products

--Get this clarified as early as possible by the tasking authority in order to preclude wasted effort: "Who wants what in what format?" A desk-side briefing? A script and accompanying slides? A report? Issue-discussion-conclusion-recommendation format? Don't settle for "I think they want..." answers from intermediate headquarters. Don't hesitate to go to the source.

CHAPTER IV  
ANALYSIS AND PORTENT FOR THE FUTURE

Timeliness of the Collection

Unfortunately, in nearly all of America's wars, no formal lesson-learning procedures existed during the first battle or even the second and third. Most of the wars, in fact, ended without the benefit of any organized lesson learning...<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, timeliness of collection, the Army succeeded during JUST CAUSE in finally overcoming a deficiency endemic to its lesson learning. The WALLP procedures were not formally codified at the time of JUST CAUSE, and their absence without a doubt caused unnecessary expenditure of CALL's and the AOT's limited resources. That shortcoming qualifies as the "half-empty glass". The overriding points, the "half-full glass", are that CALL was in existence and available to the Army Staff, so too was a lessons learned methodology, and the AOT deployed during the operation instead of months later. Gathering information from the actual participants, on or close to the actual battlefields, and shortly after, if not during operations, provided the opportunity to derive far more accurate information than in past conflicts. Timely feedback was provided to assist unit leaders and higher commanders in on-going operations, issues in DTOML were identified for proponent resolution, and verified information was gathered for historical analysis.

### Dissemination of Issues and Lessons Learned

But the reader will recall from the Introduction of this paper that the lessons learned system is a closed circuit; the best information, impressions, issues, and lessons learned are for naught if not disseminated in a timely manner to the troops in the field and to the TRADOC proponents for incorporation in doctrine, training, operations, materiel and leadership education. It is at this point--timely dissemination and follow-up--that the JUST CAUSE experience may not bode well for the ALLS unless we have persistent emphasis from the CSA to the lowest levels of the Army to force the completion of the lessons learned circuit.

Let's use the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) to illustrate the point:

By U.S. Army standards, the IDF historical publication process proceeds at the speed of light. The rationale for rapid publication is that the IDF does not want its officers to be at the mercy of journalist written war accounts, quickly done books by non-professionals, or ill founded rumors within the IDF. The small IDF history office has completed the official history of all of Israel's many wars to include the 1973 Yom Kippur War as well as half of the 1982-1984 Lebanon Incursion. By way of comparison, the U.S. Army has yet to finish its official account of the Korean War of 33 years ago and has only one of the 17-volume Vietnam history published.<sup>2</sup>

This same necessity to quickly publicize the results of the team's efforts led to the AOT recommendation given to the CSA that the initial impressions briefing and accompanying vugraph slides be published in February 1990 by CALL as one of its bulletins. This would have provided a ready-made briefing--script and slides--for commanders and leaders to brief their troops and for them to

take whatever advantage they could of the information. The bulletin would have included an up-front caveat that the initial impressions were just that--initial. Verified lessons learned and unresolved issues would be published after Phase II was complete. However, because of the threat that the media might distort the information and fail to properly caveat the findings as initial impressions, and because such a threat had materialized within days, if not hours, during URGENT FURY, the decision was to maintain the classification of the Initial Impressions Briefing and to publish only the final, rigorously analyzed lessons learned from the final After Action Report to the Army and the public.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, not until October 1990 did the Army release lessons learned and issues for Army-wide and public consumption. CALL published these lessons learned in three bulletins, addressing soldiers and leadership, operations, intelligence, logistics, and equipment. Issues involving classified operations and units and operational/strategic-level areas were not included in the bulletins and still have not been published.

As with the issue of timeliness of collection, this issue of timeliness of dissemination can be viewed from two perspectives. Using the same analogy, the pessimist can view the six-month delay in publication as the "half-empty" glass; the optimist would venture that lessons published six months after JUST CAUSE are far more timely than those still unpublished from the 1983 URGENT FURY operation.

#### DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM--The Future

With DESERT SHIELD one would assume that we could build on the success of the JUST CAUSE WALLP experience and realize even greater improvement in the

lessons learned arena. Perhaps, but perhaps not. As of early March 1991, seven months after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of Army forces, CALL still did not have USCENTCOM approval to deploy an AOT to observe combat operations. This situation exists despite the fact that a 42-soldier AOT is prepared to deploy, and the scope and significance of DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM make JUST CAUSE pale into insignificance. If ever there was an opportunity and a necessity to have an operational AOT in-theater, it is now.

Within the Army we may have climbed one mountain--establishing ALLS and WALLP and garnering CSA and ARSTAFF support--only to reach the summit and see a still higher mountain, another challenge, facing us. Theater CINCs may be from other services, and they may not be aware of the existence of ALLS, much less the potential benefits of contemporary lesson learning to commanders during on-going operations. This may apply to CINCs from the Army as well, since AR 11-33 was published fairly recently. Vetock supports this point, as he states, "While nearly everyone acknowledges the general value of lessons learning, few fully appreciate the concept and process involved."<sup>4</sup> Even if the CINCs and subordinate commanders do support contemporary lesson learning, they may perceive that the MHDs (if any) deployed in-theater are all that are necessary to "check the block" regarding an in-theater lessons learning capability. In fact, as discussed in Chapter I, the MHDs provide nothing of the sort. Finally, the CINCs and their staffs may harbor the misconception that AOT members are "excess baggage", that they may encumber or distract tactical commanders from accomplishing their missions. Human nature being what it is, this attitude may also trickle-down through successive subordinate echelons. This may be the case on DESERT STORM.

On the other hand, CINCs will be inundated with scores of self-proclaimed civilian "military analysts", retired general officer "military consultants", media members and their paraphernalia, and representatives from every proponent and integrating center of all the services. If the CINC were to open the door for the AOT, he would be under great pressure to open the door to observers from all services; the lessons learned programs from the other services may well vary in their philosophy regarding interaction (and interference) with commanders trying to conduct on-going operations as well as release of information to the media. Where, then, does the CINC draw the line, understanding that fighting the enemy must be his first, consuming priority? That is a very legitimate question, and that is most probably the situation with DESERT STORM.

What we are really doing in this situation is balancing the perceived distraction to leaders from AOT operations and the potential fallout of erroneous conclusions reaching the media and the public forum against the cost/benefits of providing near real-time lessons to leaders and troops engaged in combat. The fact that we have apparently come down on the side of damage control against erroneous conclusions would indicate that we have not convinced ourselves of the value of contemporary lesson learning.

#### Conclusions

IF DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM are portents of the future, then four points are key to the future of ALLS and WALLP. First, these programs must continue to have the full, active, and vocal support of the CSA, and that support must be clearly communicated to Army MACOM commanders and lower

echelons. Second, the Army must actively educate other services as to the provisions and benefits of these Army programs in order to gain the support of CINCs. Third, the Army must actively support and participate in the OJCS-sponsored JULLS. Finally, we must be pragmatic and realize it may be unreasonable for us to expect to deploy an AOT into the theater during the early phases of combat operations, though that would be the best case in a perfect world. The earlier quote from Vetoek bears repeating:

Unfortunately, in nearly all of America's wars no formal lesson learning procedures existed during the first battle or even the second and third. Most of the wars, in fact, ended without the benefit of any organized lesson learning--and were won, too. But at what price? U.S. Army battle deaths in those wars total nearly half a million soldiers, with more than twice that many wounded. How many casualties could have been prevented by timely lessons from the battlefields no one can say. We can be reasonably certain, however, that the process of learning from experience will not only reduce casualties but also increase combat efficiency." <sup>5</sup>

With JUST CAUSE the Army lessons learning experience took another step forward. With DESERT STORM the experience may take one step backward.

APPENDIX ONE

AOI MEMBERS

Colonel Frank H. Akers Jr.

--Qualifications

Deputy CDR, Combined Arms Training Activity (CATA), Combined Arms Center (CAC)

CDR, 3d Bde, 82d Abn Div

Chief of Staff, 82d Abn Div

J-3, Joint Special Operations Command

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

Strategic and operational command and control

Airborne operations

Special operations

Colonel Dave Archer

--Qualifications

Director, US Army Center of Excellence, Subsistence, US Army Quartermaster School, and Director of Combat Developments

G-4, 7th Infantry Division (Light)

CDR, 7th Supply and Transportation Bn, 7th Inf Div (Light)

CDR, 2d Inf Div DMMC

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

Tactical and operational logistics

Lieutenant Colonel (P) Marshall L. Helena

--Qualifications

Chief, Lessons Analysis Division, Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), CATA

CDR, 4th Bn, 325th AIR, 82d Abn Div  
S-3 and XO, 3d Bde, 82d Abn Div  
Attended Jungle Operations Training Course in Panama

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

Airborne operations  
Air assault operations  
Night Operations  
MOUT operations  
Light infantry operations  
Light/heavy unit operations  
82d Abn Div operations

Major David Buckley

--Qualifications

Training Officer, Low Intensity Conflict Proponency Office, CGSC  
S-3, XO, 2d Bn, 505th PIR, 82d Abn Div  
Company CDR, 505th PIR, 82d Abn Div

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

LIC operations  
Light infantry operations  
Night operations  
MOUT operations  
7th Inf Div operations  
Light/heavy unit operations

Major David Schroer

--Qualifications

Special Forces analyst, CALL-CATA  
A-Team, B-Team Commander, Bn S-3, 1st Bn, 5th SFG(A)  
CDR, armored cavalry troop

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

Special Forces operations  
LIC operations

Chief Warrant Officer Two Gary Fulton

--Qualifications

Instructor, Low Intensity Task Group, US Army Intelligence Center and School

Order of Battle Technician, ODCSINT, USARSO

Liaison Officer to Panama Defense Force

--Areas of interest on JUST CAUSE

Operational and tactical intelligence

LIC operations

Military police operations

PSYOPS operations

## APPENDIX TWO

### GLOSSARY

#### SECTION I

#### Abbreviations

AAR..... after action review, also after action report  
abn..... airborne  
ADC-O..... assistant division commander--operations  
AEF..... Allied Expeditionary Force  
AIR..... airborne infantry regiment  
ALLS..... Army Lessons Learned System  
AOR..... area of responsibility  
AOT..... Army observation team  
ARI-POM..... Army Research Institute--Presidio of Monterey  
ARSTAF..... Army Staff  
Bde..... brigade  
BDU..... battle dress uniform  
Bn..... battalion  
BOQ..... bachelor officers' quarters  
BOS..... battlefield operating system  
CAC..... Combined Arms Center. Parent headquarters of  
CATA.  
CALL..... Center for Army Lessons Learned  
CATA..... Combined Arms Training Activity. Parent  
headquarters of CALL.  
CDR..... commander  
CDRTRADOC..... Commander, TRADOC  
CG..... commanding general  
CINC..... commander-in-chief  
CINCSOUTH..... Commander-in-Chief, US Southern Command  
CJTF..... Commander, Joint Task Force  
CNN..... Cable News Network  
CofS..... chief of staff  
CONUS..... continental United States  
CSA..... Chief of Staff, Army  
CSI..... Combat Studies Institute  
CSM..... command sergeant major  
CTC..... combat training center  
DCSOPS..... Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Plans  
Div..... division  
DoD..... Department of Defense

EEI..... essential elements of information  
FORSCOM..... US Forces Command  
FRG..... Federal Republic of Germany  
HQ..... headquarters  
HQDA..... Headquarters, Department of the Army  
Inf..... infantry  
IPR..... in-process review

JTF-SOUTH..... Joint Task Force--South  
JULLS..... Joint Universal Lessons Learned System  
LBE..... load bearing equipment  
LIC..... low intensity conflict  
MACOM..... Army major commands  
MHD..... military history detachment  
MRE..... meal, ready-to-eat  
MOUT..... military operations on urban terrain  
NCO..... noncommissioned officer  
ODCSINT..... Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence  
ODCSOPS..... Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Plans  
OJCS..... Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
OPCON..... operational control  
PAO..... public affairs officer  
PDF..... Panama Defense Force  
PIR..... parachute infantry regiment  
POC..... point of contact  
POR..... processing for overseas replacement  
PSYOPS..... psychological operations  
Regt..... regiment  
SCI..... special compartmented information  
SFG(A)..... special forces group (airborne)  
SITREP..... situation report  
SME..... subject matter expert  
SOUTHCOM..... US Southern Command  
SSO..... special security office  
TRADOC..... US Army Training and Doctrine Command. Parent headquarters of CAC.  
USAR..... US Army Reserve  
USARSO..... US Army South  
USMC..... US Marine Corps  
WALLP..... Wartime Army Lessons Learned Program  
XO..... executive officer

## SECTION II

### Terms<sup>1</sup>

#### Combat relevant lessons learned

Conclusions derived from analysis of observations obtained from military operations and training exercises that are useful to commanders in preparing their units for combat by identifying successful doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures or problems thereto. These combat relevant lessons learned also assist proponent school commandants and the integrating center commanders in the validating or changing current doctrine, training, organization, materiel, and leadership development.

#### Combat training centers

Training centers established to implement an all-inclusive training strategy to provide tough, realistic combined arms and Services training in accordance with AirLand Battle doctrine. There are currently four CTCs: The National Training Center, Combat Maneuver Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center, and Battle Command Training Program.

#### Issue

A category of lessons learned that requires action by the subject matter proponent to change, develop, resolve, or refine doctrine, training, organization, materiel, and leadership development or exercise design. Some complex issues may impact in numerous areas requiring multiple proponents to resolve.

#### Joint Center for Lessons Learned

JCS focal point for joint lessons learned. JCLL is managed by the Evaluation and Analysis Division in the Joint Staff's Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate, J-7. This system is accessible by CINCs and their subordinate commands. Access is controlled by J-7, Evaluation and Analysis Division.

#### Joint Universal Lessons Learned System

Software support for the Joint Center for Lessons Learned that enables the systematic retrieval of selected lessons learned based on a specified set of user determined parameters.

#### Lessons learned

Validated knowledge and experience derived from observations and historical study of military training, exercises, and combat operations.

#### Observations

Raw information from any source which has not been refined through analysis. It can be either positive or negative. All input to the ALLS is labeled an observation until formally analyzed.

#### Wartime Army Lessons Learned Program

A program which focuses on the collection, analysis, and dissemination of lessons learned from actual combat experiences involving U.S. forces during major conflict. It involves the creation of observer/analysis teams at the division/corps, and theater level for the rapid identification and assimilation of significant combat lessons.

## ENDNOTES

### CHAPTER I

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Army Regulation 11-33, p. 10 (hereafter referred to as "AR 11-33").
2. Ibid.
3. Dennis J. Vetock, Lessons Learned: A History of U.S. Army Lesson Learning, p. 6. This is an excellent, comprehensive treatment of the subject up to the establishment of the Center for Army Lessons Learned.
4. Ibid., p. 37.
5. Ibid., p. 49.
6. Ibid., p. 83.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
8. Ibid., p. 122.
9. Ibid., p. 123.
10. Ibid., p. 127.
11. AR 11-33, p. 7.
12. Marshall L. Helena, LTC, Personal Notes.
13. Vetock, p. 125.

### CHAPTER II

1. Headquarters, Department of the Army (DAMO-ZA), Message 221404Z Dec 89, Subject: Army Lessons Learned For Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Commander, TRADOC, Message 222300Z Dec 89, Subject: Army Lessons Learned From Operations (sic) JUST CAUSE, p. 2.

4. Director, CALL, Operation Order 270900R Dec 89, p. 1.
5. Commander, TRADOC, Message 222300Z Dec 89, p. 1.
6. Helena, Personal Notes.
7. Commander, USACATA (ATZL-TAL), Message 172345Z Jan 90, Subject: Lessons Learned for Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 2-3.
8. Commander, USACATA (ATZL-TAL), Message 201815Z Feb 90, Subject: Army Lessons Learned Post Operation JUST CAUSE Interviews, p. 5.
9. Commander, TRADOC (ATDO-J), Message 080900Z Jan 90, Subject: Army Lessons Learned From Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 2.

#### CHAPTER IV

1. Vetoek, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 164.
3. Helena, Personal Notes.
4. Vetoek, p. 1.
5. Ibid.

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1. AR 11-33, p. 9.

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